

# **FEATURING BEST PRACTICES OF STATE AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**

## **Media Relations and Communications**

### **Media Consultations with Agency Spokespersons and Media Alert Form**

**Department of Social Services  
implemented this best practice  
in 1995**

*Qualifying under the  
Best Practices catalogue*

3 Provide Capabilities  
32 Support resources  
322 Enhance/upgrade organizational capabilities

6. Process Classification Number:

#### **Best Practice Summary (how it works, how you measure it)**

All media calls are directed to the Division of Communications. The Media Relations Specialist screens the calls and determines both the information needed along with an assessment of the possible implications of the news report. The Media Specialist is responsible for contacting the subject matter expert and reviewing the answers to the questions. Any data that is requested is analyzed for possible implications resulting from the release of the data. Research is also needed to determine if the answers to the questions are in keeping with the agency's policies and procedures.

Once the answers are provided and sufficiently analyzed, the information is included in a media alert form and forwarded to agency senior management and to the Secretary of Health and Human Resources press officer. Media consultation services are provided to agency spokespersons to ensure that all information released to the media is consistent with policy and does not place the agency in a potentially "vulnerable" position.

The media alert form is retained in the agency records for up to one year after the initial media contact has been made.

## **Impact on the Process Organizational Performance (OUTCOMES)**

The media alert form and the consultation provided by the Media Specialist provides the agency with all of the pertinent information in order to make an informed decision about responding to media calls. It has been extremely helpful in making sure that no information is released without getting all of the necessary information. Their research has proved to be instrumental in avoiding problems in the media.

## **Best Practice Qualification**

The practice qualifies as being a Best Practice because it provides the necessary information in a concise and consistent manner. The form was requested by the Secretary's office as well as other agencies outside of this secretariat. This is an excellent process to communicate critical issues.

## **For Additional Information**

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